

Linda Clair
Seven-day Meditation Retreat
Kallara Conference Centre, Australia
30 November – 7 December 2019
Transcription from Audio Recordings

File 8b – Saturday morning discussion session

Linda: How are you feeling M.?

Question: It's a bit hard to explain but early on, in the early morning sit, I realised my mind was wandering and I had the thought, "Feel the sensations in your body." And I started realising that I could feel my body in a completely unusual way, and it's been happening now. I feel like I'm starting to feel my body without my mind being involved. Usually, I've realised, either I'm mentally looking at my knees while I'm feeling my knees or I'm somehow visualising, always visualising. But this time what's been happening is I can feel in a pure way.

Linda: Not tainted.

Question: Yes, not tainted by the mind.

Linda: That's exciting.

Question: Yes, I feel like I've never really felt my body before, like something has always been outside watching it happening. Like the mind is trying to manage me feeling the body. And this is more about the body doesn't need the mind – it's perfectly capable of feeling without me being involved.

Linda: Yes, you don't need to be involved. People get very worried about this survival instinct thing – they think fear is the survival instinct, but it's not, it's your senses. It's really feeling your body; it's not the fear. And when the fear starts to subside all the thoughts start to break up, there's much less thinking, you come more into your senses, you really feel things. Like when you're going towards something that's hot it's not fear that stops you touching it, it's just the natural, instinctual body survival mechanism, "No, it's too hot!" And it's the same with most things. It's much more dangerous to be walking along the street in fear – or thinking, which is motivated by fear – than being completely in your senses looking around and being aware of what's happening. So fear actually gets in the way of survival. It's not necessary at all. But most people feel it's completely necessary to survive.

Question: And fear is the mind.

Linda: Yes. So, that's really good. So practice that on the way home, whenever you can. And you might feel like sitting more after this. Because you had a really hard time the first bit of the retreat and as I've often said that often happens before something profound like this happens. And it might feel very simple but the most simple things are often the most profound.

Question: I can't quite believe it if you know what I mean. Like, "Why hasn't this happened before? It's just about feeling."

Linda: It's just not the right time. And you've earned this. You've been working doggedly, really hard, for years now.

Question: This retreat is my fifth-year anniversary since I met you here.

Question: My question is kind of related. I'm not sure where mind starts or ends. It's hard to describe but sometimes I sit without thought, but I still get the impression there is something else, like a haze, or something in between me and the sensation.

Linda: That's the mind.

Question: But it's not talking in that sense, it's not saying something. And the other question is probably related to that. There seems to be an observer. Is that the mind too?

Linda: It can be, it can be. When you're feeling sensations you're sort of witnessing but there's no witness – there's *witnessing*, as much as possible without a witness. So I would say don't get into this self-enquiry thing where you look back and say, "Who is watching?" That will happen when it needs to happen and it will happen spontaneously. So don't get into that because then you're subtly getting into thinking again and the mind and "Who is this person, and where does it start and end?" and all that. So keep it as – it can be as grossly body-based, as grossly earthed – simple as possible. And as soon as you start getting into what may appear to be more philosophical and deep questions, cut it, come back to your body. Because those questions will just go round and round in circles and you want to get out of that repetitive circle. So use the body to break it.

There will be realisations but they won't be questions, they will be more like what M. described. There is no question about it, just, "I'm actually feeling this." But I know what you mean about that barrier. I remember I used to walk along the beach a lot – I lived near the beach and I'd walk along and I'd just really want to *feel* it, feel the sea and not have this separation. It just drove me crazy. It was like there was this veil there, this barrier, that I just couldn't get through. You have to just chip away at it. And things like this...

Question: Yes, I noticed that a lot that's it's there, and sometimes it's stronger and sometimes it's less. And I don't want it to be there, that's the other thing. I don't want the fog in between or something.

Linda: No, and that's why you're doing this and that's what motivates you – "I don't want it there! I can't stand it there. I just want to be able to walk along the beach, walk down the road, and feel the breeze." Look, be, without all this other stuff going on, without this feeling of imprisonment really.

Question: Yes, sometimes it's like a cage, and I'm thinking all I want is to get out.

Linda: Yes, and you do. But the fear keeps you in that cage, the fear of the unknown, because you want to keep it all known. You sort of don't but you do, because that's your security. So you gradually get more and more into your body until you're so secure in your body that you're able to let go of using the mind as your security. And there's no security in it of course. When you look at it

logically of course there isn't any security in thinking. Thinking is not going to do anything, it's not going to stop you doing anything, it's not going to stop anything from happening, or make something happen. It's almost completely pointless. You can know that theoretically but realising it is a different thing. And when you start to realise it, get glimpses, that's when you get excited because you go, "Oh, maybe this is possible." Rather than reading someone else's experience or listening to them you go, "Ah!" That's what I felt – "Yes, I've heard all this stuff, it sounds amazing, but I want it for me not just someone else." And I didn't want to just follow someone and worship someone for the rest of my life; I wanted to *be* this. And you can only do that by practicing in your own body.

Question: *The more I practice the better my practice. The better my practice the more I practice.* That became true for me on this retreat.

Linda: Yes, you look quite different on this retreat. I don't know what it is. More in your body I suppose, more real. Very good.

How are you D.?

Question: I'm good. I like that about the veil – I feel that a lot, the veil between me and not-me, I feel that distance. Like I haven't got my glasses on walking through life. I've had a lot of energy in my body, in my head and my chest, and my legs of all places.

Linda: Your legs?

Question: I can go on but it's not very interesting – I'm good. It's a mixed bag doing both things (D. was retreat cook and participant) but I want to do that other thing. I like to do the sitting too, but my transitioning – sometimes I could sit really well and other times I was like (groans). There was something different in me but I can't put my finger on it and I can't describe it, but I'm not so het-up I think.

Linda: Yes, I see that.

Question: There were a few times when I did lose it in the kitchen but not for very long; it just all happened in a really easy way.

I will ask one question because I've had it the whole retreat. Is the whole universe in silence or stillness? Like, when you're in the room I often feel like the glass on the piano, which goes when the piano is played and the glass trembles along with the piano and makes a vibratory sound. And I have that a lot when you come in the room and I wondered if the stillness inside is like the glass on the piano. Like it's all stillness and it's just divided off into things? Is that crap?

Linda: Well, there's no glass and no piano.

Question: The goose is out of the bottle.

Linda: When you're around deep stillness – it's why people go deep into the bush – you start to resonate with that stillness. It is so strong, so overpowering, you feel so small but you start to resonate with that greatness, that energy. And it's the same with someone who is deeply, deeply still. You're around them and you feel that, and it can do different things. You can resonate with it

but it can also trigger things in you because you suddenly start going at a faster speed. So if it meets resistance, which it will at times, you can also feel quite stirred up by it and emotional. And I used to feel that around my teachers. There was this – I just wanted to be around them, I wanted more than anything to be around them, as close to them as possible – but I'd also feel stirred up at times. But even that felt amazing, being able to. Because I'd feel that but I'd feel grounded as well, and it was an incredible combination. And I just craved it more and more.

So there is nothing in the way; there is nothing between you and anything. You just think there is. It's all to do with fear and you only realise that when it goes. But while it's still there there's still something there between "me" and ... (long silence.) You hear the birds and don't even go, "Oh, that's a nice bird." You just hear it.

Question: I figured we've got five minutes to the very last sitting so I should say something. I think the talk about the veil was helpful. I think I've come up against that at certain points in the retreat, and the frustration of it. Feeling in some way that I'm connecting to my breath and my body but also not quite. I generally feel pretty good but there is something odd there as well, something unfamiliar. There was talk a few days ago about a tendency to hide and I recognised that in myself after that conversation. It's always there but it came up really strongly that day. But there is also another element to it where I feel like I'm hiding but I'm sort of staring square at it as well, so they're both there at the same time.

Linda: So you're not pretending that you're not hiding, you're aware that you're hiding, rather than using an excuse. Good.

Question: I think spending a few days face to face with that, I don't know, something's there. I feel relatively grounded and relatively clear but there's something – this veil, this membrane – and it's an undercurrent of unease.

Linda: Well, the unease is good because it means something different is happening, you're not in your comfort zone. If you feel comfortable about all this you're probably a bit deluded. If you feel a bit uneasy it means something new is happening, something odd like you said, which is strange at first but it usually means you're going into a deeper level, something new. Something you've already felt before – what's the point of that? That's what this is all about. This is something that you've never ever felt before, and every moment is like that. It's only one moment in a way, it's always now, but it's nothing that you've ever felt before. And that's why so much preparation is needed because to be in that intensity, that edginess, and at peace with it for the rest of your life – while you're in this body – is a huge thing. Being in it for a couple of minutes, thirty seconds, is a huge thing but this is forever. It's not something you go in and out of, you don't. You don't go, "Oh no, I've changed my mind." And in that sense it's like death – you kill yourself, that's it. It's like this – you can't decide, "No, I don't want to be enlightened anymore." And you don't want to, but there are a few stages where you go, "Oh, I didn't know it was going to be like this!" But they quickly go.

Question: Even in this subtle unease, there an edge to it, there's an alertness or an aliveness about it that's keeping me engaged. And maybe similarly there are these seeming opportunities to soften it or retrace back to the mind and have a bit of a reprieve from it but even that, I can't do that without really knowing that I'm doing that, a sort of annoying feeling that I'm running away from what's here.

Linda: Well, sometimes you do need to do something to soften it a bit, and different people use different things, so don't be too concerned about that. But just be aware all the time, and that's what the edginess is, being more awake. It's not a comfortable place, but you don't want comfort. Most people here are reasonably comfortable in a way, even if it's in their own suffering, but they're here because that's not enough.

Question: I guess that's kind of comforting, that's there's something in myself, or in us, that won't settle for comfort. I can trust that there is something in me, that the compass keeps self-correcting.

Linda: Yes, and while I was going through this at times I felt, "Why can't I be satisfied with that normal comfort?" But for whatever reason I wasn't, and I'm glad now of course that I wasn't. But really in enlightenment you'll never be completely comfortable again, which might sound horrible but it's amazing. But it's difficult at times.